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4th District, Connecticut

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Senator Jay Rockefeller
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
254 Russell Senate Office Building
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Senator John Thune
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairman Rockefeller and Ranking Member Thune,

I want to thank you both, my friend and colleague Senator Blumenthal, and the other members of the Senate Commerce Committee for turning their attention today to the important issue of improving protections for cruise passengers. This is a personal issue for me. It has profoundly affected a family in my district and Senator Blumenthal's home state. In 2005, George Smith IV of Greenwich went missing while on his honeymoon cruise in the Mediterranean Sea, but the investigation surrounding his disappearance remains open to this day. Many blame poor safety regulations and lax oversight of crime scenes on vessels that operate outside of U.S. territorial waters for the lack of information surrounding Mr. Smith's disappearance. Since his apparent death, Mr. Smith's family has been fighting for regulations that would improve safety on cruise ships and protect cruise ship passengers.

The fight that began for the Smith family in 2005 and continued through the signing into law of The Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act in 2010, continues today with The Cruise Passenger Protection Act. This bill builds on the work we did in 2010 by adding in tighter crime reporting requirements, expanding video surveillance equipment and record-keeping requirements, and streamlining the federal government's tracking and public reporting of alleged crimes on cruise ships. It is safety improvements like these that will help prevent more avoidable tragedies like the Smith family's, and I remain just as committed today as I was when I took office to improving crime reporting and consumer safety on board cruise vessels. I once again thank the Senate Commerce Committee for its leadership on this important but oft-neglected safety issue, and I urge this bill's swift passage.

Sincerely,

Congressman Jim Himes (CT-4)